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ABSTRACT

The author details the steps involved in the adoption of a trimester program at a Texas junior high school. The trimester schedule divides the regular school year into three equal 60 day periods. The option of a summer quarter can be added as the need arises. Under the plan, school periods are 70 minutes long in the junior high school and 80 minutes long in the high schools. Class periods are divided into smaller blocks of time to better accomodate new teaching methods within a class. The program also utilizes some team teaching, open space classrooms, and resource labs. The trimester plan enables students to concentrate on fewer courses at a given time and to have more school resources available. It also allows students who do not make adequate progress the opportunity to catch up within the school year without any loss of normal course offerings. The schedule gives teachers a longer planning period, the opportunity to teach more in their fields of interest, increased student contact, and the opportunity to work with each student in his prime learning time of day. (Author/DN)

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NEW APPROACHES TO FLEXIBLE SCHEDULING AT HARWOOD JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

HARWOOD JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

HURST-EULESS-BEDFORD INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

BEDFORD, TEXAS 76021

PRESENTED BY

E. DON BROWN, PRINCIPAL

at

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INTRODUCTION

The Texas Education Code, Chapter 16, Subchapter 6-1, directs the Texas Education Agency to initiate a "Reorganized curriculum based on the operation of schools on a quarter basis." The legislative authorization of the quarter system or year-round school would offer opportunities for curriculum changes in the Texas public schools. The implementation of the quarter system in the secondary schools would necessitate modifying each subject offering to allow credits according to a semester unit plan or a quarter unit plan.

The intent of such legislative action was to promote the year-round use of public education facilities in Texas. Students would eventually be given the choice of attending the summer quarter rather than the typically scheduled fall, winter, and spring quarters. At the option of the school district, schools would be allowed to operate on the semester unit plan or the quarter unit plan. The program was to begin in September of 1973 for all Texas public schools.

The troubled cry of educators from throughout the state went out for more time. The legislature responded by revision of the mandate to become effective with the 75-76 school year. The Hurst- Euless-Bedford School District continued with their plans by allowing the Harwood Junior High School to pilot the Trimester Schedule in the 72-73 school year. Several changes were made by the school in creating new and different methods of teaching. In September of 1973 the other four junior high schools in our district began operation of the Trimester Schedule. This school year saw our two high schools completing the transition, making all secondary schools in full compliance with the state statutes.

This report will deal with the steps of evolving the Trimester approach as experienced by the faculty and students of Harwood Junior High School.

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TRIMESTER TIME SCHEDULE

As the name implies, the trimester has divided the regular school year into three equal 60 day periods of time. The option of the summer quarter will remain for the school district to add as the need arises. To implement the shortened number of days, the daily time available for each class was extended from 55 minutes to 80 minutes per class period. Thus the decision to bring about change thru the extended period was initiated.

QUARTER SYSTEM
*180 DAY ATTENDANCE REQUIRED

FALL QUARTER - AUGUST 26 - NOVEMBER 14	58 DAYS
WINTER QUARTER - NOVEMBER 18 - FEBRUARY 21	60 DAYS
SPRING QUARTER - FEBRUARY 25 - MAY 30	62 DAYS

* OPTIONAL SUMMER QUARTER - JUNE 2- AUGUST 22 55 DAYS

EXTENDED PERIOD OR 80 MINUTE PERIOD

The implementation of the individualized approach to teaching was the major goal as we began to try to change teacher methods, from teacher centered to student centered instruction. Two major changes occurred in teacher thinking as a result of the 80 minute period. They realized that the standard lecture, assignment, test method of teaching would be disasterous with the extended class time; secondly they saw the need for dividing class time and the use of multi-method instruction to meet the need of individual students. Our high schools have maintained the 80 minute class period with the use of the open ended school day. The junior high schools have shortened the school period to 70 minutes to prevent the long school day. Each ninth grade student is assigned a 70 minute independent study lab each day. Teacher Aides work directly with the classroom teacher to coordinate lab assignments with class work. Seventh and eighth grade students are not involved in the scheduled independent study labs.

JUNIOR HIGH STUDENT SCHEDULE - 70 MINUTE PERIOD

		FALL	WINTER	SPRING
PERIOD 1	8:30-9:40	English	English	History
PERIOD 2	9:45-10:55	History	Math	Math
PERIOD 3	11:00-12:35	*Ind. Study	*Ind. Study	*Ind. Study
PERIOD 4	12:40-1:50	Health	Science	Science
PERIOD 5	1:55-3:05	Band	Band	Band

*9th Grade must take independent study - 7th & 8th choose electives.

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HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT SCHEDULE - 80 MINUTE PERIOD

PERIOD 1	8:15- 9:35	Biology	Math	*(Open)
PERIOD 2	9:40-11:00	Math	English	Biology
PERIOD 3	11:05-12:55	Driver Ed.	German	German
PERIOD 4	1:00- 2:00	Band	Band	Band
PERIOD 5	2:25- 3:45	*(Open)	*(Open)	English

* Students have open campus on Period 1 and 5. Students may take 5 classes daily only if behind other students.

A. OPEN CONCEPT

Our teachers envisioned that the open space classroom was more suitable for multi-method instruction. The classroom must be divided into large group, small group, and even down to the individual to meet the various requirements of these learning experiences. Students were then placed homogeneously in groups of 100 to 120 with the team of four classroom teachers, two resource aides, and a librarian-resource teacher. By the use of multi-media and multi-resources, the team was able to disseminate students thru various stages and methods of group and individual learning experiences.

B. TEAM TEACHING

Our teams soon realized that all would be fruitless unless there was extensive planning before students arrived. As a result of our teaming, our teachers have done a much better and more extensive job of planning their classroom activity. Our teams are organized with a grade level coordinator who is responsible for initiating the basic plan for his level. As the planning session progresses each teacher may suggest ideas or changes that they feel would better suit the needs of the specific group of students they are working with at that time. A coordinated 80 minute planning period is provided each day for the team planning.

C. THE 20 MINUTE MOD

It was necessary to divide the class period into smaller blocks of time to better accommodate the changes in methods and activities within the class. Our 80 minute period was divided into four 20 minute mods of time, thus various activities were planned for one mod (20 minutes), or two mods (40 minutes), etc. This helped our team to plan their time better and also compensate for the short attention span of most junior high students.

Our teachers felt this gave even more flexability than the flexable modular schedule which is being used by many schools. The flexability of student ability groups, library and resource assignments, long or short media presentations, as well as the individual skills and interest of teachers seemed to all be accessible with this type of schedule.

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CLASS PERIOD SCHEDULE - 110 STUDENTS WITH 4 TEACHERS

Mod 1- 9:40-10:00 -	Roll Call, Pre-Test, Grouping	
Mod 2-10:00-10:20 -	Group A	
	Group B	Read Assignment (1) Teacher
	Group C	
	Group D	Discussion Group (1) Teacher
	Group E	Discussion Group (1) Teacher
	Group F	Library Assignment (1) Teacher
Mod 3-10:20-10:40	Group A	Discussion Group (1) Teacher
	Group B	Discussion Group (1) Teacher
	Group C	Discussion Group (1) Teacher
	Group D	Group Project
	Group E	Group Project (1) Teacher
	Group F	Library Assignment
Mod 4-10:40-11:00	Group A	
	Group B	
	Group C	Observe Presentation (1) Teacher
	Group D	
	Group E	
	Group F	Present Skit, Debate, etc.
	Subgroup 1 -	Ind. Study (1) Teacher
	Subgroup 2 -	Ind. Study (1) Teacher
	Subgroup 3 -	Ind. Study (1) Teacher

D. RESOURCE OR INDEPENDENT STUDY LABS

Our teachers have the optional independent study labs available for student use each period of the day. Each of our academic pods has a resource lab which is manned by their instructional aide. The aide is involved with the team in planning, preparation, and implementing the instructional program. A student may come to the resource lab from his academic class or he may be assigned there during his independent study period. Ninth grade students have an independent study lab scheduled each day. Also available is the main resource center or library. This building is located in the center of our mall type building design and is manned by a trained resource teacher and two resource aides. Bound volumes, periodicals, tapes, carrels, filmstrips, conference rooms, etc. are available for student use at all times.

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STUDENT INDEPENDENT STUDY SCHEDULE

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
Period 1	Class	Class	Class	Class	Class
Period 2	Math Lab	Band Lab	Science Lab	*Open	Eng. Lab
Period 3	Class	Class	Class	Class	Class
Period 4	Class	Class	Class	Class	Class
Period 5	Class	Class	Class	Class	Class

*Student may be scheduled by teacher or by himself

STUDENT WELFARE

The program or schedule as has been described has many built in advantages to the student. In this section we will try to explain some of the more unique advantages.

A.
Students take major academic subjects only two/thirds of the school year or for only two of the three tris. By the use of this scheduling students may concentrate more time on fewer subjects at any given time.

B.
There are more resources available at a given period of time for student use. Courses like Science, Home Economics, Industrial Arts, and Physical Education will have no more than two thirds of the students enrolled at a given time. Students have more space, equipment, and time to work in Lab classes such as those mentioned. Resource materials are also more available for their use than ever before.

C.
Re-cycling of students. Students who do not make adequate progress in a given class may be re-cycled within the school year without any loss of normal course offering. In most cases students are able to catch up during the school year rather than attend the optional summer session.

TEACHER WELFARE

It is our belief that the schedule which we have implemented has worked to the advantage of our teaching staff in the following manner;

A. Planning Time
Each teacher is provided an 80 minute planning period with his fellow team members to plan and prepare for their class.

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B. Better Certification
Teachers are now teaching three or four class periods daily, rather than the traditional five. This has enabled us to minimize the number of teachers who have split assignments. Teachers work primarily in their major field of study.

TEACHER SCHEDULE

A. High School Teacher - 7½ hour work day

	FALL	WINTER	SPRING
8:00 AM	Start Day		Start Day
8:15-9:35	Class	8:30 Start Day	Class
9:40-11:00	Class	Class	Class
11:00-12:55	Class & Lunch	Class & Lunch	Class & Lunch
1:00-2:20	Class	Class	Planning
2:25-3:45	Planning	Class	Conference
	3:30 End Day	4:00 End Day	3:30 End Day

B. Junior High Teacher - 7 3/4 hour work day

	FALL	WINTER	SPRING
8:00 AM	Start Day	Start Day	Start Day
8:30-9:40	Class	Class	Class
9:45-10:55	Planning	Class	Class
11:00-12:35	Class & Lunch	Class & Lunch	Planning & Lunch
12:40-1:50	Class	Class	Class
1:55-3:05	Class	Planning	Class
3:45 PM	End Day	End Day	End Day

C. Student Contacts
The teacher has increased the number of students taught over the year; but, he will notice a decrease in student contacts daily. The daily pupil load has dropped from a typical 150 down to a typical 120 per day. The number of students, papers, test, etc. that a teacher must see daily has thus been decreased by twenty percent.

D. Revolving Schedule
Because of the extended period it is no longer necessary to offer subjects like Band, Athletics, Drill Team, etc. at a given time. We have initiated a revolving daily schedule that provides the teacher with the opportunity to work with each student at his prime learning time of the day. Our teachers feel very strongly that they have more success with students when they are scheduled in AM classes. This schedule is changed from Tri to Tri to meet the needs of our extra curricular programs.

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*REVOLVING DAILY SCHEDULE

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
8:30-9:40	1	2	5	1	4
9:45-10:55	2	1	4	2	5
11:00-12:35	3	3	3	3	3
12:40-1:50	4	5	2	4	1
1:55-3:05	5	4	1	5	2

*Daily schedules are changed from Tri to Tri to meet the needs of our program.

EVALUATION

In our three years of involvement with the trimester program we have gathered many interesting and informative conclusions, most of which would evolve around the two words error and change. Both have been a frequent part of our evaluation. There has been no single part of this schedule that will serve to create the teaching utopia that all educators seek.

Our evaluation has included; (A) Evaluation and Accreditation by the Southern Association of Schools and Colleges; (B) Evaluation by the Texas Education Agency; (C) Evaluative visit from the Region XI Educational Service Center; (D) the combined efforts of the Hurst-Euless-Bedford School Board and Research and Planning Council; (E) and many visitors in our building and visits outside our building by our teachers.

The schedule has not determined success or failure of our school program. However, it is our belief that this schedule has given us a much needed bearing toward the successful teaching of children.